

2300 Lake Elmo Drive  
Billings, MT 59105

## NOTICE OF DECISION

April 21, 2003

TO: Environmental Quality Council  
Director's Office, Dept. of Environmental Quality  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Director's Office  
Parks Division  
Fisheries Division  
Wildlife Division  
Montana Historical Society, State Preservation Office  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council  
Montana Wildlife Federation  
Montana State Library  
George Ochenski  
Montana Environmental Information Center  
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation  
Montana Parks Association  
Representative Bob Raney  
County Commissioners  
Other Local Interested People or Groups

Lands Section  
Design & Construction  
Legal Unit  
Regional Supervisors

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared for Fish, Wildlife and Parks to grant funds to the City of Billings through the local government Boating Improvement Program for improving the boat ramp in Coulson Park in Billings, Montana. The draft EA was circulated for 32 days and legal notices were published in the Billings Gazette, Helena Independent Record and on Montana's electronic bulletin board. In addition, time was allotted at the March 24, 2003 Billings City Council meeting.

The department has decided to proceed with the project as described in the Environmental Assessment.

No public comments were received. The State Historic Preservation Office provided concurrence that the project would have a low chance of impact on cultural properties.

This project is subject to appeal, which must be submitted to the FWP Director in writing, and postmarked within 30 days of the date on this decision notice. The appeal must specifically describe the basis for the appeal, explain how the appellant has previously commented to the department or participated in the decision-making process, and lay out how FWP might address the concerns in the appeal. If you have questions regarding this decision notice, please contact me at 247-2951.

Sincerely,

Harvey Nyberg  
Regional Supervisor

*Yellowstone  
Miss.*

2300 Lake Elmo Drive  
Billings, MT 59105

February 24, 2003

TO: Environmental Quality Council  
Director's Office, Dept. of Environmental Quality  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Director's Office  
Parks Division  
Fisheries Division  
Wildlife Division  
Montana Historical Society, State Preservation Office  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council  
Montana Wildlife Federation  
Montana State Library  
George Ochenski  
Montana Environmental Information Center  
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation  
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624  
Montana State Parks Association, PO Box 699, Billings, 59103  
Joe Gutkoski, President, Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18<sup>th</sup> Ave., Bozeman, 59715  
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624  
Yellowstone County Commissioners, POB 35000, Billings, MT 59107-5000

Lands Section  
Design & Construction  
Legal Unit  
Regional Supervisors

Dear Interested Citizen:

The Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks is proposing to grant funds to the City of Billings through the local government Boating Improvement Program for improving an existing boat ramp at the City of Billings' Coulson Park. This project will enhance boat access at Coulson Park and includes a cabled concrete flex mat boat ramp and parking.

A copy of the EA is attached for your review. Your comments, concerns and letters of support are welcome. Please direct questions or comments to Doug Habermann, Regional Parks Manager, MT Dept Fish Wildlife And Parks; 2300 Lake Elmo Drive; Billings, MT 59105, or e-mail to [dhabermann@state.mt.us](mailto:dhabermann@state.mt.us). Comments will be accepted through March 28, 2003.

Sincerely,

Harvey E. Nyberg  
Region Five Supervisor

*Yellowstone  
Misc*

# MONTANA FISH WILDLIFE & PARKS

## MEPA/NEPA EA CHECKLIST

### PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

**1. Type of Proposed State Action:** Provide cost-share funding to improve an existing Boat Ramp at City of Billings' Coulson Park on the Yellowstone River.

**2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:**

Fish, Wildlife and Parks has authority to provide development for recreation on Department lands under 23-2-101 MCA. 87-1-209 MCA directs the Department to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. 23-2-533 MCA, gives FWP the authority to expend the fees collected in lieu of tax on motorboats on any public boating facility.

City of Billings  
P.O. Box 1178  
Billings, MT 59103

Region Five  
MT Dept Fish Wildlife And Parks  
2300 Lake Elmo Drive  
Billings, MT 59105

**3. Name of Project:** Coulson Park Boat Ramp Improvement

**4. Name, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency):**

Billings Dept. Of Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands  
City of Billings, Box 1178  
Billings, Mt. 59103

**5. If Applicable:**

**Estimated Construction/Commencement Date:** 4-01-03

**Estimated Completion Date:** 9-30-03

**Current Status of Project Design (% complete):** 50%

**6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range, and township):** Yellowstone County, Range 26E, Township 1N, S34, NWSE 4, IN Coulson Park

**7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain .....	1
residential.....	_____		
industrial.....	_____	(e) Productive:	
		irrigated cropland.....	_____
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation .....	1	dry cropland.....	_____
		forestry.....	_____
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas .....	_____	rangeland .....	_____
		other.....	_____

**8. Map/Site Plan:** attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

See attached:

**9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project, Including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action:**

The City of Billings proposes the following activities to be accomplished in the scope of work for the Coulson Park Boat Ramp construction:

- Reconstruction of the light watercraft access ramp so that it can accommodate vehicles and trailers for launching and retrieving powerboats.
- The placement of concrete cable mat (18 feet wide by 40 feet long anchored to the ramp pad) in the river to allow for access at all water levels. Pour a concrete apron at the top of the ramp. Gravel the access surface to the ramp.
- Establish and delineate a suitable parking area for vehicles with boat trailers, including a suitable trail path crossing.
- Install interpretive signage at the ramp where river regulations, fishing regulations, maps of the area, and general information can be posted.

The City of Billings' Coulson Park is a popular location for access to the Yellowstone River for recreational craft float trips, those that enjoy the ease of access to the river for fishing from the bank, day-use including picnicing, or for just enjoying the spectacular scenery at this site.

The property that the park sits on was the City of Billings landfill until the late 1940's. The City has improved the land to be un-irrigated park with vault toilets, and a trail system link that connects the park to the rest of the trail network. The City's park department operates and maintains the park and will continue to do so when the project is complete.

This project will be a great asset to all that use and appreciate the natural beauty of the Yellowstone River and its resources. Access to the Yellowstone River in the vicinity of Billings is highly desirable. This site provides an alternative access to the East Bridge FAS downstream on the opposite shore at low water flows or as the river shifts channels.

**PROJECT TIME SCHEDULE:** Construction on the project would be scheduled for spring and early summer of 2003. The project is expected to take about one month to complete.

**10. Listing of Any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency That Has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:**

**(a) Permits:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
MT DEQ	318 Authorization	_____
MT FWP	SPA 124	_____
Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404	_____
Yellowstone County	Floodplain Permit	_____
DNRC	Land Use license	_____

**(b) Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
MT Boat in Lieu Grant	\$ 25,600.00
City of Billings	\$ 6,000.00

**(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
NONE	

**11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:**

City of Billings Public Works Department, Public Utilities Department  
Montana Fish, wildlife & Parks

## **PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

### **1. Evaluation of the impacts of the proposed action, including secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical and human environment.**

#### **A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

<b>1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
➤a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X			1b.
➤c. Destruction, covering, or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition, or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream, or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other (list)		X				

**1b.** The construction of a boat ramp at Coulson Park will require the addition of base materials and concrete surface ramp construction on an existing rock/gravel ramp structure now in place.

2. <u>AIR</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
➤ a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13c.)			X			2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				
f. Other		X				

**2a.** The construction of the boat ramp will not affect air quality. Additional vehicle traffic due to added use of the boat ramp will be minor. Temporary dust and vehicle emissions will occur during the construction phase.

3. <b>WATER</b>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
➤ a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water- related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		X				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)			X			3m
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3. The reconstruction of the boat ramp will not have a cumulative or secondary effect on water resources or water quality.

3m. There will be a temporary and minor discharge during construction of the ramp. This will be covered as a temporary exemption under the 318 permit.



<b>4. <u>VEGETATION</u></b> <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

4. The reconstruction of the boat ramp will not disturb significant vegetation as there is minimal vegetation in place at this time due to compaction and disturbance from existing vehicle traffic and the poor physical and chemical make-up of the soils.

<b>5. FISH/WILDLIFE</b>  Will the proposed action result in:	<b>IMPACT</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest, or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		X				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				
j. Other:		X				

5. The reconstruction of the boat ramp will have no immediate effect on fish and wildlife but may increase awareness and interest in the fish and wildlife resources in this part of the Yellowstone River corridor and may justify additional management efforts and expenditures to improve them over time.

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

6. The reconstruction of the boat ramp serves to only improve an already existing facility. Another boat ramp is available in the vicinity. Ambient noise from Interstate 90 is already present.

7. <u>LAND USE</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____		X				

7. Coulson Park is an existing undeveloped public recreation area, and the land use will remain the same. Traffic to the site and use of the public facility is likely to increase.

<b>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></b>  Will the proposed action result in:	<b>IMPACT</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

8. The reconstruction of the boat ramp will have no cumulative or secondary effects on risk or health hazards.

<b>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u></b>  Will the proposed action result in:	<b>IMPACT</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				

9. The reconstruction of the boat ramp serves only to improve the existing park.

<b>10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electrical power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
➤e. Define projected revenue sources.		X				
➤f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				
g. Other:		X				

10. The reconstruction of the boat ramp will have no cumulative or secondary effects on public services/taxes or utilities. Any impacts due to increased use will be addressed by existing Billings City parks budgets.

<b>11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u></b>	<b>IMPACT</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista, or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
➤c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach tourism report.)				X		11c
d. For P-R/D-I, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

- 11c. The reconstruction of the boat ramp will add to the recreational use of the park by making a wide, safe and more attractive access to the river.

<b>12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
➤ a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure, or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12a.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

12. The construction serves only to improve an already existing Park.

**12a.** Coulson Park is located on the old Coulson town site. After Coulson was abandoned, this area was the city landfill for a substantial period and all vestiges of the old town have disappeared. The park was recently the site of river stabilization to seal off the landfill debris from washing into the Yellowstone River. The existing primitive boat ramp was constructed as part of that project and this project will improve it to permit the launching of larger craft. Any historic resources are either destroyed or so deeply buried that no impacts are anticipated.

<b>13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</b>  <b>Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources, which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard, or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
<input type="checkbox"/> f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13. The reconstruction of the boat ramp serves only to improve an already existing park. A 318 permit and a 124 permit have been applied for. The riverside construction will take place on the existing ramp pad already in place.

## **PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CONTINUED)**

1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:
  - A. Reconstruct the boat ramp to provide a much safer and improved environment for access to the river at a popular use park. This is our preferred action.
  - B. No action, and leave the park in its present condition.
2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency: None

## **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

The boat ramp project at Coulson Park will serve to improve a very popular park, providing a much safer and better access to the river for all users. There is great demand for boat launch access to the Yellowstone in Billings and the Yellowstone County and this improvement will help meet this need. Coulson Park is a focal point for the City of Billings when coming from the east along I-90. The improvements will serve to present a more positive image for the City of Billings. The City of Billings will maintain the site and ensure that this facility remains open to the public.

## **PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION**

1. **No EIS is required.** The project serves only to improve an already existing park and so an EA is the appropriate level of review.
2. **Public input for this project.**

Time will be allotted at the March 24, 2003 Billings City Council meeting for public comment. This meeting is at 6:30 pm at City Hall. Public notices will be published in the Billings Gazette, Helena Independent Record and the State electronic bulletin board asking for public opinion to the project for 30 days. Design options were discussed with local users of the current boat ramp to arrive at the final design that was submitted for approval.
3. **Duration of comment period, if any:** Public comment period will run from February 24th, 2003 to March 28th, 2003.



**4. Name, title, address, and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

Gene Blackwell  
Superintendent of Parks  
Department of Parks, Recreation and Public Lands  
City of Billings, Box 1178  
Billings, Mt. 59103  
(406) 657-8373  
E-mail: [Blackwellg@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:Blackwellg@ci.billings.mt.us)

Doug Habermann  
Regional Parks Manager  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
2300 Lake Elmo Drive  
Billings, MT 59105  
(406) 247-2954  
email: [dhabermann@state.mt.us](mailto:dhabermann@state.mt.us)